



California Commission on Access to Justice

Providing perfect justice for the few does not equate with justice for all. Those of us who can afford legal representation must care about those who cannot if we care about our society.

*California Chief Justice Ronald M. George
Opening Remarks, Access to Justice Symposium,
April 23, 2008*

The California Commission on Access to Justice is a collaborative effort involving all three branches of government as well as judges, lawyers, professors, and business, labor, and other civic leaders. The Access Commission is dedicated to finding long-term solutions to the chronic lack of legal assistance available for low-income, vulnerable Californians. Its goals include increasing resources for legal services for the indigent, expanding pro bono and language assistance, and increasing the availability of self-help assistance and limited scope legal representation. It works closely with the State Bar, Judicial Council, and other agencies to implement its far-reaching recommendations.

California Commission on Access to Justice The First Decade



We in the judicial branch have been most fortunate to have the Commission on Access to Justice as an active and innovative partner. All Californians are fortunate to have so many individuals dedicated to improving the administration of justice for all.

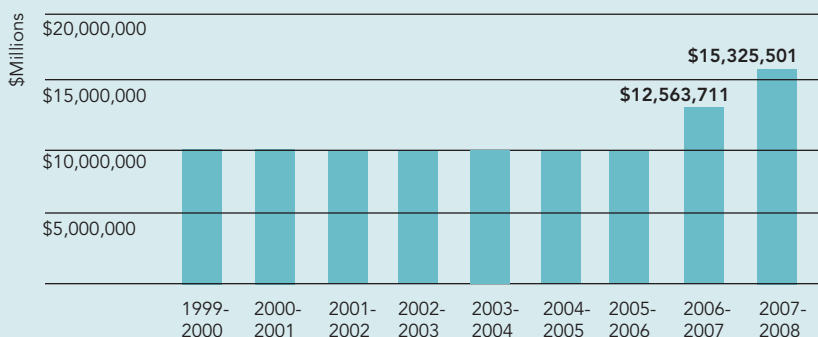
*California Chief Justice Ronald M. George
Opening Remarks, Access to Justice Symposium,
April 23, 2008*

The California Commission on Access to Justice was established in 1997 to pursue long-term fundamental improvements in our civil justice system so that it is truly accessible for all, regardless of income or language ability. Establishment of the Access Commission was recommended in the 1996 report of the State Bar of California, *And Justice For All*.

- **Reports.** Published extensive reports on “access to justice” issues, including *Action Plan for Justice* (2007), *Language Barriers to Justice in California* (2005), and *The Path to Equal Justice* (2002).
- **Equal Access Fund.** Worked with the Judicial Council to establish the Equal Access Fund in 1999. The Fund now supports 100 legal services programs, offering legal help in every county in the state. Over \$97 million has been distributed.
- **Language Access.** Addressed language barriers in the courts, and published *Language Barriers to Justice*.
- **Self-Help Centers.** Worked closely with the Judicial Council to expand attorney-staffed self-help centers.
- **Aranda Award.** Established the Benjamin Aranda III Access to Justice Award honoring California judges for their leadership and commitment to justice.
- **Limited Scope Representation (“Unbundling”).** Conducted innovative studies, published reports and risk management materials, offered dozens of training events, and helped develop new court rules and court forms with the goal of expanding the availability of Limited Scope Representation.
- **Statewide Web Site.** Helped to develop LawHelpCalifornia, a statewide web site for legal services clients and lawyers, available through the Public Interest Clearinghouse and the Legal Aid Association of California (LAAC).
- **National Efforts to Expand Access Commissions.** California’s Access Commission was one of the first in the country, and it has worked closely with the ABA and other national groups to ensure that similar commissions are available across the country.

Equal Access Fund

1999-2000 through 2007-2008 Total Revenue: \$97.9 million



Number of Eligible Clients Per Legal Aid Lawyer in 2005

Number of Californians below 125% of Poverty	6,304,000
Number of Legal Aid Lawyers	754
Number of Eligible Clients per Legal Aid Lawyer	8,361

Committees and Task Forces

- **The Language Access Coordinating Committee** – addressing language barriers in the courts – joint with representatives of the Judicial Council and the legal services community;
- **The Funding Committee** – developing new resources for civil legal services in California and helping ensure continuation and expansion of the state’s Equal Access Fund;
- **The Pro Bono Task Force** – encouraging increased pro bono in all areas of the state, particularly rural areas, and seeking to increase attorney giving of both time and financial support;
- **The Rural Task Force** – addressing “access” issues in rural areas of the state;
- **The Model Statute Task Force** – drafting “model” civil statutes that create and define the scope of a statutory entitlement to equal justice including a right to counsel in appropriate circumstances; and
- **The Access & Delivery Committee** – identifying what levels of assistance or representation will be required for clients in different legal situations, how to best coordinate the continuum of service, and how to overcome systemic barriers to access.
- **The Federal Courts Committee** – coordinating information about services for self-represented litigants and model pro bono projects; collaboration is facilitated by the involvement of representatives from each federal district in California.

Recognition of the Commission’s Work

The California Commission on Access to Justice received the ABA Louis M. Brown Award for Legal Access in 2004 in recognition of the innovative work of its Limited Scope Representation Committee.

The Commission’s work was also the key reason the State Bar received the ABA’s prestigious Harrison Tweed award in 2001, “...for its collaborative efforts in obtaining the first state appropriation for legal services in the amount of \$10 million and seeking to increase it, for addressing the needs of unrepresented litigants and for supporting the important work of legal services programs in the state.”



California Commission on Access to Justice Appointing Entities

Governor of the State
of California

California Attorney General

President Pro Tem
of the Senate

Speaker of the Assembly

Judicial Council of California

California Judges Association

State Bar of California

California Chamber
of Commerce

California Council of Churches

California Labor Federation

California League
of Women Voters

Consumer Attorneys
of California

Council of California County
Law Librarians



At root, equal justice is simply the notion that law and the courts should be fair, even if life isn't.

*Hon. Earl Johnson, Jr., Ret.
Associate Justice,
California Court of Appeal,
Second Appellate District;
Speech at Opening Ceremony,
National Equal Justice Library,
quoted in 17 Saint Louis
University Law Review 265 (1998).*

State Bar of California
180 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
<http://calbar.org/accestojustice>



The State Bar of California | Office of Legal Services,
Access & Fairness Programs

Members, California Commission on Access to Justice – 2008

Commission Members

Hon. Steven Austin

Co-chair
Superior Court of
Contra Costa County
Martinez

Joseph L. Chairez

Co-chair
Baker & Hostetler LLP
Costa Mesa

Ramon Alvarez

Alvarez Lincoln/Mercury
Riverside

Kenneth W. Babcock

Public Law Center
Santa Ana

Marcia Bell

San Francisco County
Law Library

David N. Bigelow

Girardi & Keese
Los Angeles

Sheila Calabro

Administrative Office
of the Courts Burbank

Robin C. Crawford

Law Office Of Robin Crawford
Pacifica

Rozenia D. Cummings

California State
Automobile Association
San Francisco

Erika Frank

California Chamber of Commerce
Sacramento

Honorable James E. Herman

Superior Court of
Santa Barbara County
Santa Maria

Michael J. Loeb

JAMS
San Francisco

Robert A. Long

Latham & Watkins LLP
Los Angeles

Sylvia Martin-James

Retired, Riverside Unified
School District
Riverside

Hon. Nho Trong Nguyen

Superior Court of
Orange County
Westminster

Ekwan E. Rhow

Bird, Marella, Wolpert, Nessim,
Drooks & Lincenberg
Los Angeles

Hon. Ronald Robie

Court of Appeal,
Third Appellate District
Sacramento

John Snetsinger

California Polytechnic
State University
San Luis Obispo

Hon. Julius M. Title, Ret.

Superior Court of
Los Angeles County
Los Angeles

Eric Wayne Wright

Santa Clara University
School of Law
Santa Clara

Ex Officio Members

Kathryn Eppright

Andre Morris & Buttery LLP
San Luis Obispo

Honorable Terry J. Hatter, Jr.

Chief Judge Emeritus
United States District Court
Los Angeles

**Honorable Earl Johnson, Jr.,
Ret.**

Associate Justice,
Court of Appeal
Second Appellate District,
Los Angeles
Scholar-in-Residence
Western Center on Law & Poverty

Honorable James R. Lambden

Associate Justice,
Court of Appeal
First Appellate District,
San Francisco

Jack W. Londen

Morrison & Foerster
San Francisco

Professor James Meeker

School of Social Ecology
University of California, Irvine

Tony L. Richardson

Reed Smith LLP
Los Angeles

Geoffrey L. Robinson

Bingham McCutchen
Walnut Creek

Toby J. Rothschild

General Counsel
Legal Aid Foundation of
Los Angeles

**Honorable Ronald L. Taylor,
Ret.**

Superior Court of
Riverside County
Riverside

Honorable Laurie D. Zelon

Court of Appeal
Second Appellate District
Los Angeles